ARTS & CULTURE

Spring Edition

VISION ENGINEERED: ART MEETS INGENUITY IN CINEMA

WHY DO MOVIES AND SHOWS LOOK SO DULL?

EUSEXUA AND THE POWER OF VISUALS IN MUSIC

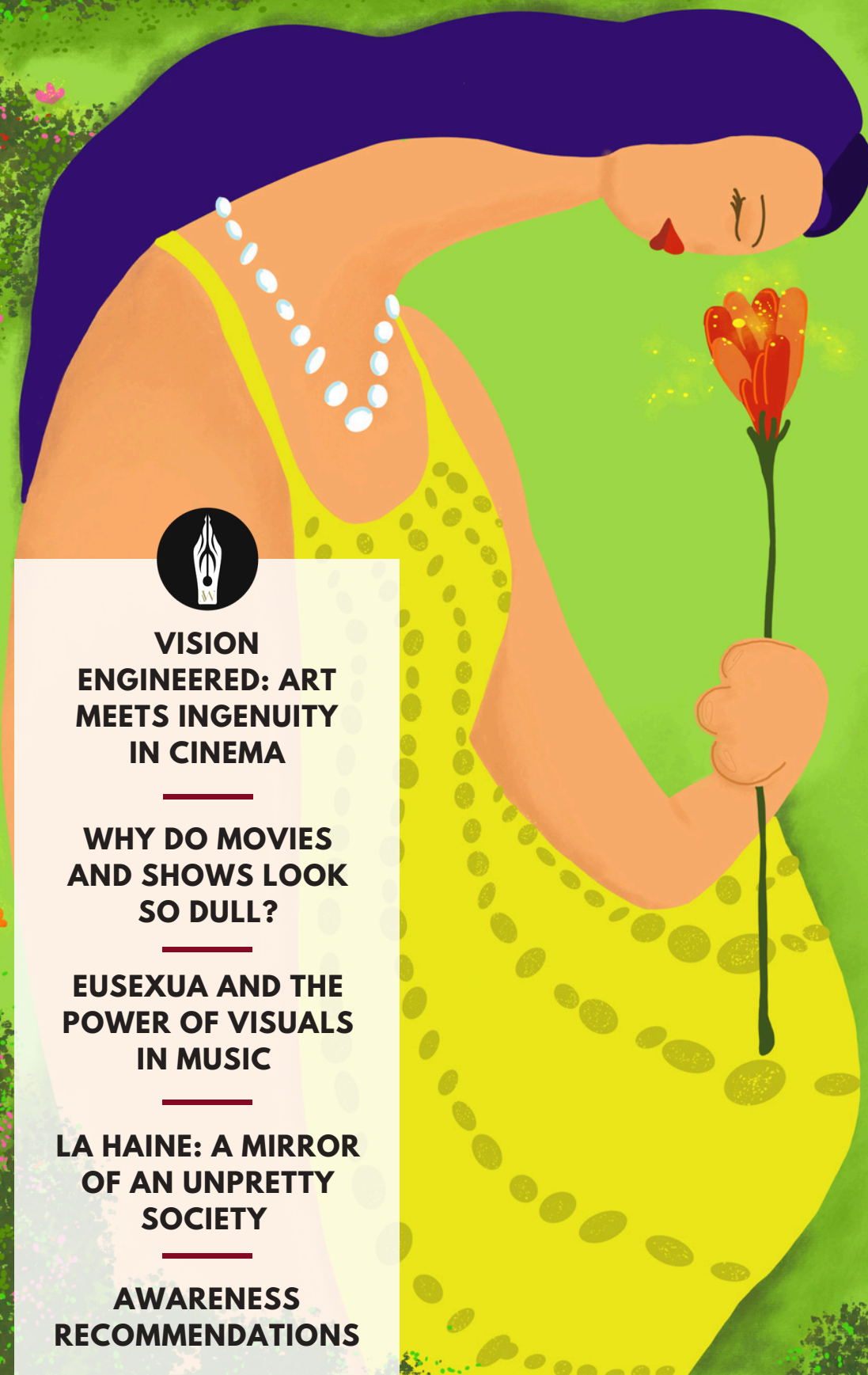**LA HAINE: A MIRROR OF AN UNPRETTY SOCIETY**

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EDITORIAL

The Arts and Culture Magazine is the meeting place of some of the creative minds of Nova Awareness Club. Following last semester's magazine about everything women, our team decided to pick a theme again.

This edition is about image, visuals and film, a perfect theme for the Arts and Culture department. It encompasses the visually stimulating aspect of art which takes many forms: the obvious direct visual facet of what you see on a screen or a canvas for example, but also the power of art to evoke unique images and universes in our minds. Think about the impact a certain shot of a movie can have on your experience as a viewer, or about how some art pieces allow you to immerse yourself so fully into their universe, whether it be a film, a book or a painting, or even how a song can bring back so many memories.

For this issue, Marco Pagliacci explores the connections between creativity, ingenuity and technology in cinema and how the intricate evolution of all of these has shaped what we see on big screens.

Then, still in the field of cinema, Mafalda Carvalho and I focused on the current discourse about the dullness and darkness of movies and shows, diving into the birth of colour in film and exploring the transition from Technicolor and film to the digital age.

Mafalda also wrote a piece exploring the impact of music videos on the effect that music has on us, relying on FKA Twigs' recent project EUSEXUA.

Following this we have a review piece on Mathieu Kassovitz' 1995 masterpiece La Haine, written by Ana Cardoso.

Finally, our magazine regular: the cultural recommendations. This time, Matilde Lopes tackled them.

Welcome to the sixteenth edition of the Arts & Culture magazine, we hope you enjoy!

- *Marta Nascimento*

VISION ENGINEERED: ART MEETS INGENUITY IN CINEMA

BY MARCO PAGLIACCI

Throughout history, visual art has never been merely about representation, it has always been shaped by the tools and techniques available to artists. When painters discovered perspective, they revolutionized the way we understand space. When they shifted from tempera to oil, or later embraced photography, collage, and installation, they opened new frontiers for visual expression.

The same holds for cinema. As the youngest of the visual arts, film has evolved at the pace of technological change, constantly redefining the boundaries of what can be shown. From silent black-and-white frames to hyperreal digital worlds, every major shift in technique has expanded the language of cinema.

But at the heart of this evolution, both in traditional art and in film, lies **creativity**. It is not technology alone that drives innovation, but the **creative impulse** to explore new ways to represent the image and the message that the artist wants to express. In cinema, especially, creativity has often been the only way to visualize what had never been seen before. Directors and cinematographers have bent the rules of optics, invented new shooting techniques, and pushed machines to their limits—all in pursuit of unique images that could speak to the imagination.

Yet creativity alone is not always enough; the spark of imagination often collides with the limits of what is technically possible. And this is where **ingenuity** steps in. Particularly in cinema, where the vision of a scene can depend on a camera movement never attempted before, the creative idea must be translated into a mechanical solution.

Shots are not only artistic choices, but feats of engineering. Filmmakers have built custom rigs, designed robotic arms, mounted cameras on drones or even on actors themselves, all to give life to images previously confined to the imagination, just as Renaissance artists invented new tools to better render light or anatomy, modern directors and cinematographers bend the rules of physics to bring emotion and vision together. The history of visual storytelling is, in the end, not only about **inspiration** but also about **invention**.

Topgun F-5s and camera-carrying Learjet flown by Clay Lacy **I** *DAVE BARANEK (2024)*

**Top Gun**, directed by Tony Scott in 1986, marked a turning point in the way aerial sequences were filmed. At the time, airplane movies were often dismissed as dull and visually static, largely due to the technical limitations in capturing objects flying at 1,600 km/h. One of the main challenges was adding a sense of **perspective and movement**, since without it, fighter jets appeared like tiny dots floating in a flat blue sky.

To make the background dynamic and give the audience a sense of speed, the filmmakers shot as many **low-altitude scenes** as possible, allowing the landscape to rush by in the frame. A special anti-aircraft turret was modified to mount **six synchronized cameras**, enhancing visual coverage and giving editors a wide array of dramatic angles. For the airborne sequences, they used a **Learjet equipped with a periscopic camera system**, which enabled them to follow the jets closely and smoothly in motion. These pioneering techniques redefined how speed and spatial immersion could be portrayed on screen, turning *Top Gun* into a visual landmark and a technical case study for action cinema.

Today, a big part of this process can be simplified using CGI. Introduced in the 1990s, it changed the landscape of special effects, even if some directors as the well-known Christopher Nolan, continue to prefer the so-called SFX, which are effects physically created on the set.

Steven Spielberg's **Jurassic Park** was not the first movie with a CGI character, but it might be the one that helped normalize their presence on screen.

The original plan was to use animatronics, large mechanical puppets, for close-up shots of the dinosaurs. For wider scenes, the creatures were going to be brought to life through stop-motion animation, a technique in which physical models are moved frame by frame to simulate movement.
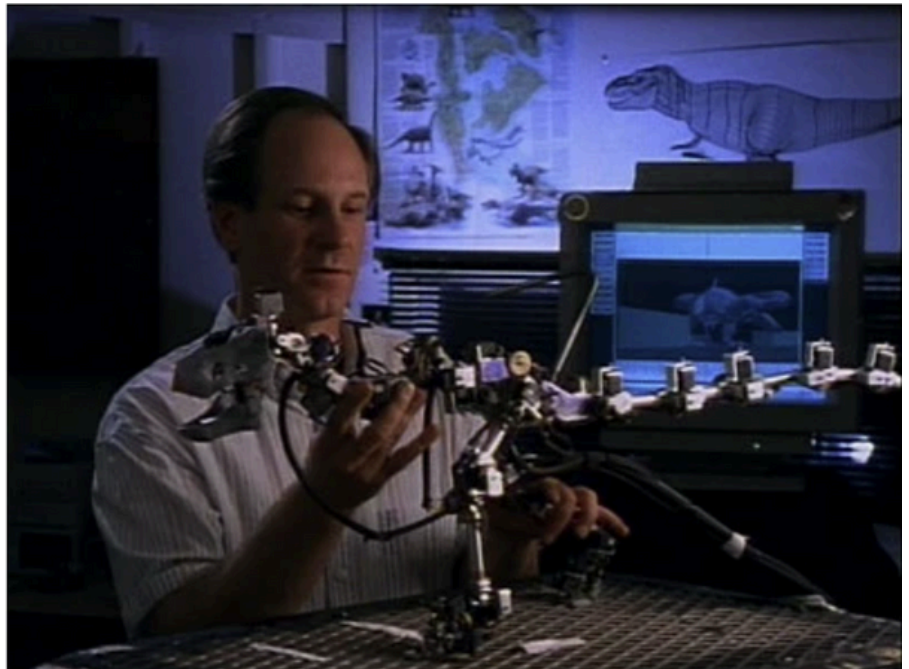
Eletronic dinosaur skeletons, animated in stop-motion and digitalized (in the back) I Jedd Jong, published in F*** Magazine, Issue 64/65 'Resurrection of the Dinosaurs', 2015

However, during production, a member of the visual effects team at Industrial Light & Magic (the studio founded by George Lucas) proposed to animate a full-sized dinosaur entirely with computer graphics.

This early use of CGI was still quite rudimentary, since the dinosaur models were initially moved by hand by the stop-motion team using a system that connected their physical movements to the digital skeletons on screen. The creatures weren't yet fully modelled or animated within the computer; they were, in a way, a hybrid of analog movement and digital rendering.

The real revolution that set the standard for modern visual effects is *Avatar.* The film was built around a ground-breaking innovation: motion capture, a technique that records the movements of actors to animate digital characters. What set *Avatar* apart was how far this technology was pushed. Director James Cameron was able to **see the fully rendered digital scenes in real time** while filming the actors' performances on set.

The scale of the project was enormous: *Avatar* generated over one petabyte of data, making it one of the most technically demanding productions in film history.

Even more ambitious was the sequel, *Avatar: The Way of Water*, which explored **underwater motion capture**—a frontier never seriously attempted before. Shooting underwater posed new challenges: one major issue was the reflective surface of water, which interfered with the motion capture sensors. To solve this, the production team covered the entire tank, containing 2.5 million litres of water, with semi-transparent floating balls, blocking reflections, allowing light to enter, and the cameras to capture accurate data.

In conclusion, the director's artistic vision can be expressed in many ways but, especially in films for broad audiences, innovative techniques are essential to bring to life the images generated by the creative mind. In this light, technology stands as the primary ally of boldness and inventiveness, which are the reasons cinema will continue to take audiences' breath away.
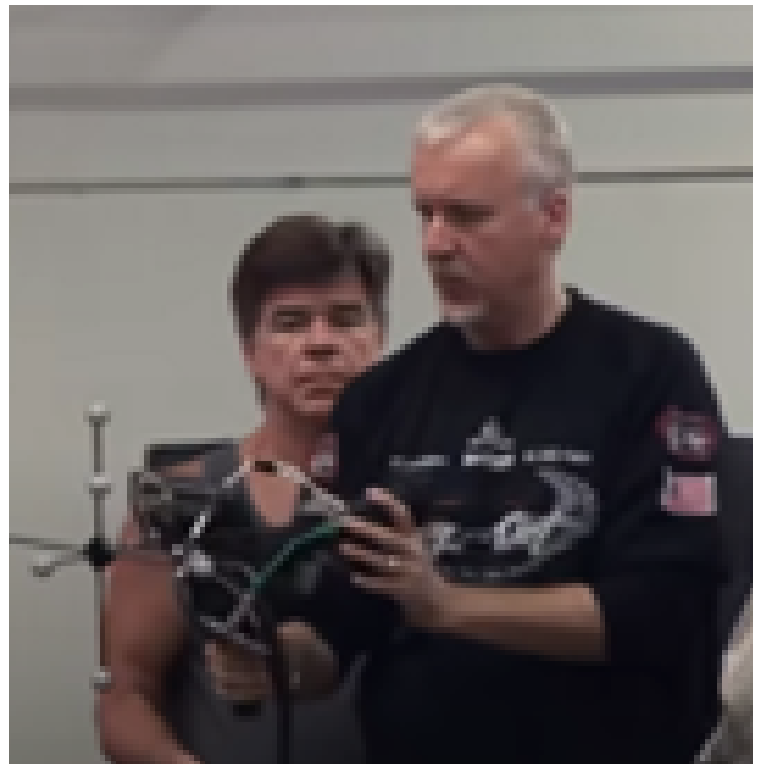
"Fake Camera'" used to move in the CGI world
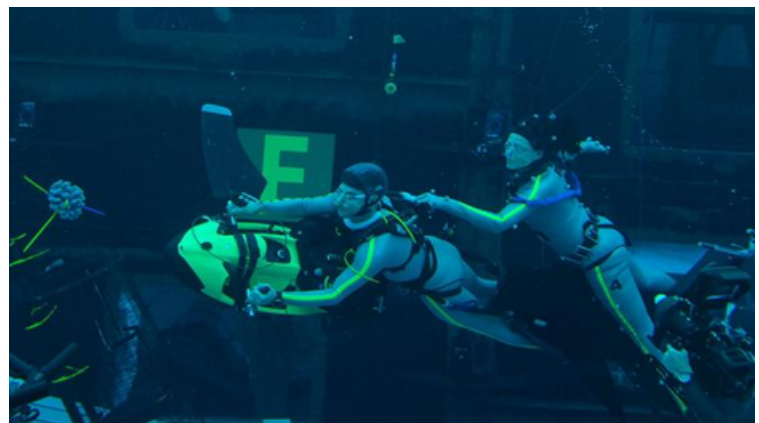
Underwater motion capture. Avatar: The Way of Water (20). I 20th Century Studios

Cast and crew, including Kate Winslet, went through extensive training to hold their breath underwater to limit the release of air bubbles, which the performance capture system can't distinguish from the actors' marker dots. (Mark Fellman/20th Century Studios)

From the advent of the earliest hand-painted frames until today, colour has shaped not only how movies look, but how we feel about them. It sets the mood, defines characters, and brings entire worlds to life. However, over the past decade or so, a growing number of viewers have been wondering why most movies and tv shows are looking so… dull? Why does modern film and television look and feel visually flatter than it used to?

In this article, we trace the path from the first experiments in hand-coloured film to the vibrant era of Technicolor, and finally into today's digital age. We explore how modern filmmaking technologies brought more equity, accessibility, and flexibility to filmmakers, but also introduced new visual trends that now define much of what we see on screen. By diving into the case study of the colour-saturated wonder of *The Wizard of Oz*, and its much-debated 2024 sequel *Wicked*, aim to answer the question: Is this desaturated trend just an aesthetic choice? Or is it a symptom of deeper changes in how films are made, and how we watch them?

The First Colour Movies
Towards the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, shortly after the introduction of motion-picture, filmmakers began experimenting with techniques to try and introduce colour to the latter. These first attempts were very **experimental** and **difficult to set in place**. Some initial projects were **hand painted frame by frame**, which was extremely labour intensive and time consuming. French filmmaker George Méliès, one of the great pioneers of motion-picture, employed 21 women to

hand-colour his films at his Montreuil studio, including his 1902 masterpiece *A Trip to the Moon*. In the US, Thomas Edison and his team were developing other techniques like **tinting and toning** to add colourful hues to the black and white film stocks and give more depth to t he storytelling. Nonetheless, black and white still dominated the industry in the early 20th century.

The first truly revolutionary advancement in film colouring emerged in the 1920s after the birth of Technicolor. This subtractive two-colour process was introduced by Herbert Kalmus' **Technicolor Corporation** in 1922 and used a special camera and procedure to produce two separate prints that were then merged into a single print which could be projected through ordinary equipment. This technique was used successfully in films, such as Albert Parker and Douglas Fairbank's 1926 *The Black Pirate*, and was improved throughout the 1920s. However, since it only used two of the three primary colours, the end results were not yet completely realistic, and its popularity began to decline. This decline came to a halt with the

Picture: Dorothy Gale, The Wizard of Oz, I Warner Brothers Entertainment
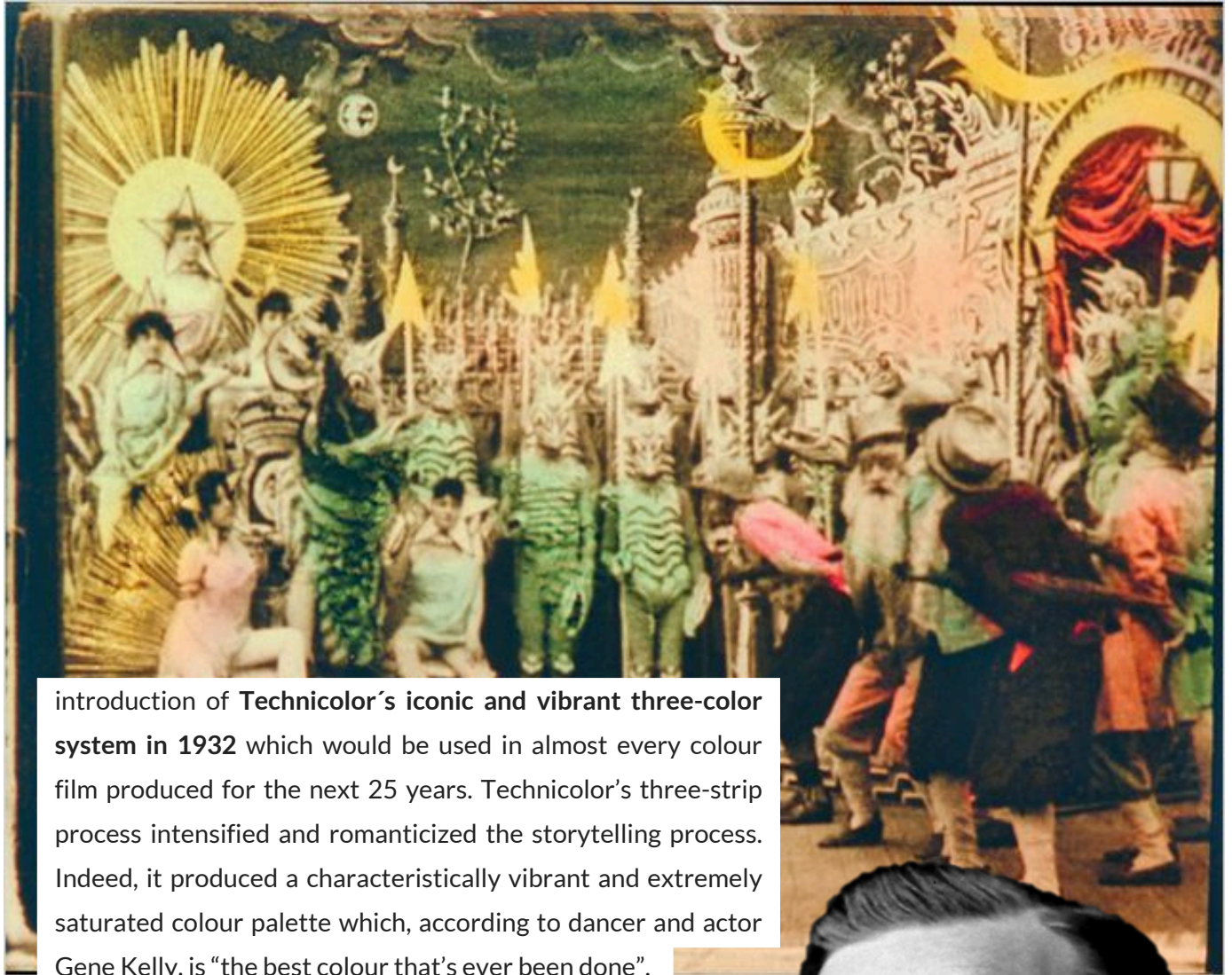
introduction of **Technicolor´s iconic and vibrant three-color system in 1932** which would be used in almost every colour film produced for the next 25 years. Technicolor's three-strip process intensified and romanticized the storytelling process. Indeed, it produced a characteristically vibrant and extremely saturated colour palette which, according to dancer and actor Gene Kelly, is "the best colour that's ever been done".

Among the most famous Technicolor films is Victor Fleming's 1939 masterpiece *The Wizard of Oz,*
which we will use as a case study, in comparison to
John M. Chu's 2024 *Wicked*. The 1939 film's bright yellow
brick road and Dorothy's iconic red shoes come to mind as
soon as it is mentioned, showcasing the amazing legacy of
Technicolor. Dorothy's shoes were described in the book as
silver, but the film's producers intelligently chose to make
them red to contrast with the yellow road and better fit the
Technicolor technology. These details and the film itself became
so famous that many people believe it was the first coloured
film ever made.
On the other hand, this method had some setbacks. First
 of all, there was a **limited number of cameras available** as they

"the best colour that's ever been done"
-Gene Kelly

were supplied by Technicolor itself. Cameras had to be reserved months in advance and movies could not be made if a camera was not available. The equipment was also pretty **expensive**, and the intricate filming process made budgets skyrocket. Moreover, the camera was huge and **extremely difficult to manipulate**, and exposure required a substantial amount of lighting, resulting in harsh working conditions on set, with temperatures often rising above 40ºC. Ray Bolger, who played the scarecrow on *The Wizard of Oz*, commented that:

"It was one of the most difficult jobs I've ever done . . . it was just physical work, and under very trying circumstances . . . we were using a thousand-foot candlepower with hot light, and chewing up the oxygen in the studio".

The end result, however, was one of the most colourful and vibrant movies in our collective imagination. Technicolor gave The Wizard of Oz an unforgettable magical feel, and the way colour is used in the movie is still referenced today, almost a century later.

Pictures and backstage photos from the film 'The Wizard of Oz' (1939), Victor Fleming.
The DF-24 camera, invented in 1932, is one of several that were used by cinematographer Hal Rosson to film the Wizard of Oz.

Picture: 'Wicked' film (2024), Universal Pictures

The Transition to the Digital Age

In sharp contrast to the impression left by The Wizard of Oz, when the trailer for Wicked came out last year, there were criticisms all over the internet that it looked grey, dull, and washed out. But once the movie actually came out, opinions started ranging massively. Some viewers described Wicked as a joyful, colourful experience, whereas others stuck to the opinion that it was unnecessarily unsaturated.

Wicked can be seen as a symptom of the overall trend in recent movies and shows that has been surging since the 2010s. New releases often just feel somewhat... muted. Emily St. James, in an article named "Colors: Where did they go? An investigation." for *Vox*, in 2022, used the term "**intangible sludge**", which she described as a visual trend in film and TV where everything starts to look muted and muddy, losing that richness and variation that used to define older visual styles. She gives the example of the iconic early 2000s series *Dexter*.

Dexter's first season, shot on film and released in 2006, was vibrant, lively and full of colour. However, the 2021 digital-shot sequel looks nothing like its predecessor. As Emily puts it, talking about the main character, played by Michael C. Hall, "Hall's skin is pale and even yellowish. His shirt is an indefinable blue/green/black/brown. A shadowy blandness coats everything.". **Can we then say that digital is the reason why movies are much less saturated nowadays?**

Not really. There are too many recent beautiful digitally-shot movies that are vibrant and colourful to state that digital is to blame for dullness. **The last decade has given us cinematic masterpieces** like *Moonlight, Midsommar, The Holdovers, Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, or any recent Pedro Almodóvar movie, which are just as colourful as his earliest film-shot ones. The problem is not **in the medium** we use — it's in **how we use the medium.**

The late 1990s and early 2000s marked a pivotal shift in cinema with the advent of digital filmmaking. **Digital technology significantly lowered the barriers to entry** for aspiring and independent filmmakers. Affordable digital cameras and easy to use editing software made it possible for creators with little finances to produce and distribute their movies. This **democratization** of filmmaking empowered a **diverse** array of voices, allowing for a broader range of stories to be told and reaching audiences worldwide through emerging digital platforms. What's more, digital was much more **practical** than film. It allowed filmmakers to see how scenes were looking in real time, while filming. It also allowed for scenes to be **reshot** over and over again, without need for the level of meticulousness with lighting that was required in the film era, as colour and light could be **easily edited** in post-production.

Picture: 'Pain and Glory' film (2019), Pedro Almodóvar

In an interview for the same 2022 Vox article mentioned previously, cinematographer Christian Sprenger pointed out something extremely interesting. He stated that film is in fact naturally less saturated than digital, but when digital first appeared, its first releases were extremely bright and "poppy," which contrasted massively with the historical footprint of cinema produced up to then, and more importantly, with what people were used to. Thus, directors went the opposite direction.

They tried to tone things down, to make their movies look more like traditional cinema. Throughout the 2010s, there was this move towards darker, more dimly lit projects, partly because they carry a sense of seriousness.
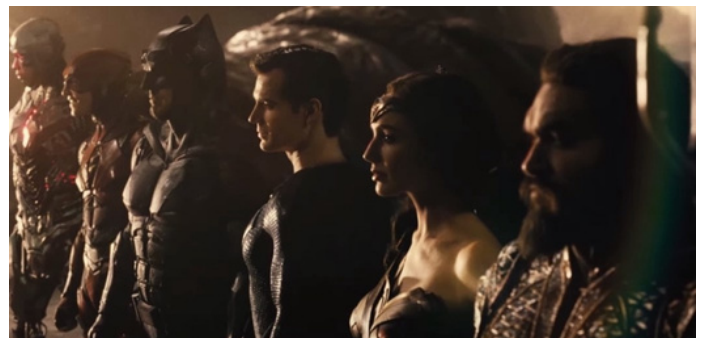
Going back to *Wicked*, when director Jon M. Chu was asked why the movie wasn't as bright as *The Wizard of Oz*, he explained that they wanted Oz to feel like a real place. They wanted the story, the characters, and the situations to feel grounded and real.

Unlike *The Wizard of Oz*, Wicked is much more of an adult film, with many political undertones to it. And more importantly, the main characters are actually from Oz. They're not like Dorothy, who came from a grey and joyless Kansas, and for whom Oz represents wonder and transformation. That contrast is what made the colour in *The Wizard of Oz* feel so impactful. Colour choices in *Wicked* were indeed **choices, not technical limitations.** If the directors had wanted to replicate the same colour palette as in *The Wizard of Oz*, they could have. Even though Technicolor isn't used anymore, there are ways to achieve a similar aesthetic through lighting and editing alone. *The Florida Project* by Sean Baker is a great example of this.

La La Land is yet another recent example of a movie that makes brilliant, beautiful use of colour, in a way that much more resembles the film era than the 2010s dark and dull trend, as it is in fact inspired by and references many old Hollywood films, without, however, losing its ground in the reality it portrays.

But maybe part of the problem isn't just how films are made. Maybe it's also **how we're watching them.**

People online might be having completely different experiences watching the same movie, because they're seeing it in different ways. The transition to digital also meant that many cinemas switched to digital projectors, because it was cheaper for everyone to distribute movies in digital format. Digital projectors also do not need any labour to operate them, and so cinemas save money. However, **these digital projectors do deteriorate over time** and consequently the image fades, the colours dull, and the whole movie looks worse.

Picture: 'La La Land' film (2016), Damien Chazelle.

Imaging devices should be replaced once or twice a year to maintain colour and image quality, but many cinemas simply do not do it, as this is expensive. Especially post-pandemic, many cinemas have simply not had the budget to do this.

In addition to this, most people don't even watch movies in cinemas anymore. They stream them at home. The advent of streaming means that, in order to be distributed, movie files must be compressed. This **compression process translates into image quality losses**, which may affect how colour shows up on the screen. It may be a very different visual experience than to watch the same movie in a cinema - with a good projector, that is. Another issue may be the home TVs we use. Except that the problem is that they may be too good. Most TVs nowadays use 4K imaging. However, most CGI technology is rendered at 2K. This means that it is highly likely that it just won't look right in a 4K TV.

What's more, the extended use of CGI may also explain part of the recent trend towards muted colours. This is because it is easier to blend CGI into a movie if there isn't too much contrast or saturation.

The debate about colour in cinema is not just a matter of aesthetic preferences of the viewers. Colour is a reflexion of moods and of emotions. Each shift in technology has opened new creative possibilities while also shaping how stories are told. The move to digital didn't strip cinema of its colour. It made filmmaking more accessible, more equitable, and more efficient. In the process, it may also have changed how we think about lighting, saturation, and even realism. What we're seeing today isn't a failure of technology. It's a trend, a choice, and in some cases, a side effect of how and where we consume media. Films like *Moonlight, La La Land, or The Florida Project* prove that colour still has the power to deepen a story. And as digital tools continue to evolve, so too will the visual language of cinema.

'EUSEXUA' and the Power of Visuals in Music

BY MAFALDA CARVALHO

Photos from 'EUSEXUA' videoclip, by FKA Twigs (2024)

Ever since MTV became a thing in the 1980s, music has stopped being something we simply listen to. It's something we watch, whether on our phones, laptops, or TVs. **Music videos have become a medium for artists to tell the story that music alone sometimes cannot convey**. They have become inseparable from the song they accompany. 95 out of the 100 most watched videos on YouTube are music videos, and they reach billions and billions of views. Why is it that music artists and listeners seem to pay so much attention to visuals and music videos?

FKA Twigs' Surreal World of *EUSEXUA*

Released in January this year, and much anticipated by music fans, FKA Twigs' third studio album *EUSEXUA* is a prime example of the **power of visuals** in the music industry. In *EUSEXUA*, FKA Twigs did not limit herself to making music. **She built an entire reality.**

The visuals weren't just music videos. They were portals into this world, into the emotional and thematic layers of her songs.

As she put it in an interview,

> "I think that for the first time now that I'm older, I consider myself—and you know, I say this in a shy way—but I consider myself a movement artist because I'm developing my own flow."

That vision is felt throughout *EUSEXUA*, where every choreographic movement, camera angle, every costume, and every gesture is an extension of the music's meaning. FKA Twigs has described the actual meaning of "eusexua", a word invented by her, as a state of *flow*, of elevated clarity, where one becomes a feeling, and not just a person or a physical body.

FKA Twigs wanted to pass on "eusexua" to her listeners, in the most intense and pure format that she could. From the corporate surrealism of the "Eusexua" video to the mythic movement language in "Perfect Stranger," to the actual mutating, alien-like visuals that accompany some of the songs on streaming platforms such as Spotify, Twigs used visuals to say what words alone couldn't.

Twigs fuses sound and image in a way that feels personal and intuitive. However, **the emotional power of this symbiosis is actually backed by science.**

The Psychology of Music and Image

A 2022 study by Dasovich-Wilson et al. offers some answers into how we interpret music videos. They introduced a model called IARR, Intention, Attention, Reaction, and Retention, which maps out how music videos change the way we feel and remember music. **Visuals don't just illustrate songs; they reshape them**. Watching a video can influence the emotions we associate with a song, and those associations stick in our long-term memory. We actually remember things better when we use more than one sensory receptor to process it. When we watch a music video, we are capturing sound and image. Visuals may offer interpretation but also spark new mental pathways. The more vivid and emotionally intense the visual, the more it seems to amplify the music's effect.

Music Videos in the Streaming Era

Looking back to the past decade, we must admit that, although still important, as proved by YouTube's watching history, traditional music videos are not as popular as they were during MTV's golden years. But visuals have not disappeared, they have evolved. On platforms like Spotify, looping micro-videos called Canvases now accompany many tracks.

According to Spotify's own data, these **few seconds of imagery can massively increase engagement with a track.** But can six seconds of looping video really make a difference?

Apparently, yes. Just like the visuals in *EUSEXUA*, even the shortest clips can set a tone, evoke a mood, or hint at a narrative. And as streaming continues to shape how we discover and consume music, it makes sense that **visuals are getting smaller, quicker, and more immersive.**

Visuals help us feel music more deeply. They offer emotional context, invite interpretation, and make songs more memorable. In an age of infinite content, they help music stand out and stick with us. And for artists like FKA Twigs, they're not optional. They're part of the art. Her work on *EUSEXUA* shows that music must not only be heard, but also performed and embodied.
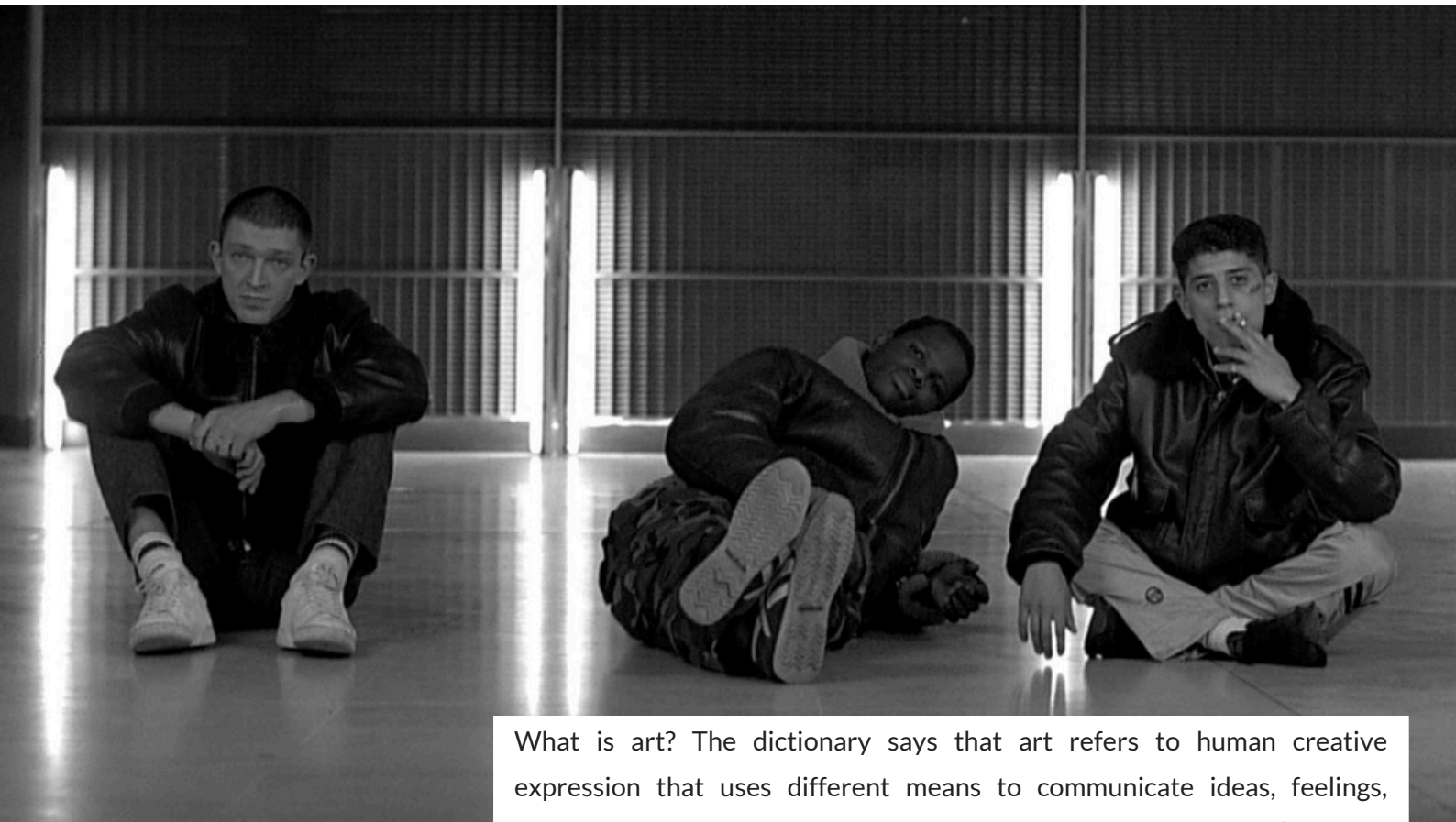
BY ANA CARDOSO

'LA HAINE' A MIRROR OF AN UNPRETTY SOCIETY - 30 YEARS OF A FRENCH MASTERPIECE

What is art? The dictionary says that art refers to human creative expression that uses different means to communicate ideas, feelings, experiences, and worldviews. It can take many shapes, be visual (painting, sculpture), auditory (music), performative (theater, dance), literary... Within the vast spectrum of human expression, cinema weaves together all forms of art into a single, unified medium. Visual art in motion, driven by performative and literary art, accompanied by auditory art. To me, cinema is the most complete form of art, where directors and artists project their understanding of the world tangibly, and share a message that can truly resonate. In this edition about film and imagery in art, I will write about one of my favorite movies.

La Haine was released in 1995, directed by the French filmmaker Mathieu Kassovitz, and shot in black and white. In its first scene, one of the most striking openings in cinema history, we see an explosive hitting the Earth while the narrator says:

"This is the story of a man who falls from a fifty-story building. During the fall, to reassure himself, he keeps repeating: Jusqu'ici tout va bien. Jusqu'ici tout va bien. Jusqu'ici tout va bien (So far, so good). But what matters is not the fall. It's the landing."

In this scene, any cinema lover is unconsciously immersed in the new reality Kassovitz presents. Throughout the film, *La Haine* proves to be perfectly constructed in terms of imagery, sound, and script. The plot unfolds over 24 hours in the lives of three friends of different ethnic backgrounds who live in the Parisian suburbs, where violence and marginalization are part of daily life. The film becomes a true social identity piece, set against the backdrop of immigration, discrimination, and police brutality. But to me, its most brilliant aspect is the development of its three main characters and the genius way it portrays the instability of human character in each of them.

Vinz, Jewish, is the most erratic and unpredictable of the group. He shows an impulsive and aggressive nature, with little ability to process and control his emotions. Every word from Vinz reflects the rage and attitude of a young man growing up on the streets of a housing project on the outskirts of a major city.

Hubert, a boxer, is the most sensible of the group. He represents those who want more than what life has given them, those who strive for a better life. Despite being a boxer, he is the most peaceful and reluctant when it comes to the violence around him – the violence he sees, lives, but does not understand. He is the most mature character, capable of playing a mediator between impulse, survival, and moral responsibility. Calm and charismatic, he is easy for any viewer to identify with—because of his sensitivity and moderation, but mostly because he represents all those who want to change their destinies, escape their realities, and seek a better life.

Said, Arab, presents a lighter personality, sometimes exaggerated and a bit more comedic. Violent but charming, carefree, and irresponsible, he is ultimately revealed as the story's narrator. The most discreet of the three, but the one who will carry the trauma of those 24 hours forever.

Vinz, 'La Haine' (1995)
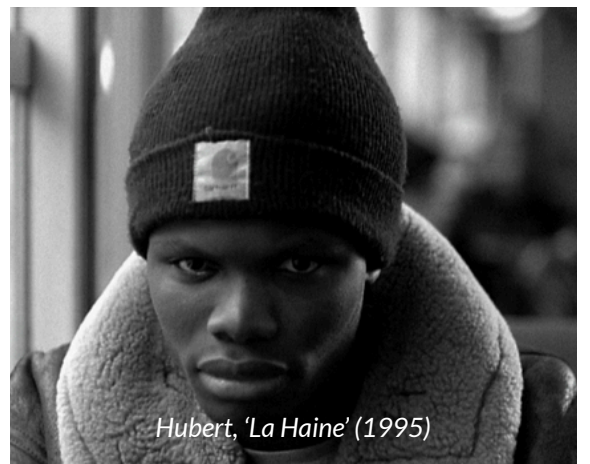
Hubert, 'La Haine' (1995)

Said, 'La Haine' (1995)

Each character is complex and deep. Despite being very different, all three are highly volatile and deeply rooted in their shared origins, always teetering on the edge of complete unpredictability. The trio's dynamic is unique: a brotherhood binds them, inexplicable to outsiders. There are so many scenes where they could and should have separated, but they're always drawn back to each other. As if an invisible motto echoed between them: *Whatever happens, we're in this together.*

Picture taken from the film 'La Haine'

I recently found out that the director chose to use the actors' real names for their characters. I believe that in some way, this made the story personal for those who were only supposed to portray it. Their performances are personal, raw, complex, and absolutely brilliant. Each, in their own way, is an accurate reflection of the complex reality of thousands of individuals who inhabit the outskirts of big cities.

In the final scene, masterfully executed, you realize that everything you've watched can be distilled into that single moment. All the emotions built over an hour and a half are suddenly concentrated, and in just 20 seconds, you feel them all at once.

So, how did they land? When you're falling… It's easy to predict.

A film not to be missed.

Cinema is an art that immortalizes entire present-day realities. This film, captures the marginalization of a social class characterized by immense cultural and ethnic diversity, where violence and intolerance prevail. In 1995, that was the reality. Thirty years later, in 2025, that reality remains. When I rewatch this film, I wonder, will its theme still be relevant thirty years from now? Perhaps… In truth, the themes that divide us, that separate us, that touch us, that unite us, they all share the same roots, or are the same as they've been since the dawn of humanity. Will we ever be able to change them? I don't know. Perhaps the art of cinema can help us not forget how far we've come, and how much further we still need to go.

Awareness Recommendations

BY MATILDE LOPES
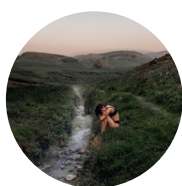
Movie

Released in 2023, Oppenheimer is an American and British dramatic biographical film that conveys the journey and legacy of J. Robert Oppenheimer, the father of the atomic bomb. Directed by Christopher Nolan, the movie was nominated for 13 Academy Awards and won 7 of them - one of which being "Best Picture".
To understand why this movie is being recommended to you, I have to introduce you to two people first.

Julius Robert Oppenheimer

Son of immigrant jews, born in New York in 1904. After getting into Harvard and completing his studies in thermodynamics and experimental physics with distinction, he moved to Europe to pursue the latter. He joined Cambridge University and, later, Gottingen University, in pursuit of higher studies in theoretical and quantum physics. Once he concluded his PHD, Oppenheimer returned to America to begin his proclaimed career in research.

By this time, the world had turned upside down and Hitler had ascended to power, which created, amongst a couple of the world's most renowned scientists, the need to invent the atomic bomb before the nazis. With his Jewish background, it wasn't hard to see why Oppenheimer joined them - and so began Project Manhattan. Incidents aside - and believe me, there were many - J. Robert and the rest of the team reached their goal and created what would be humanity's most destructive weapon, both a symbol of war and peace.

Oppenheimer's reputation would forever be as the father of the atomic bomb, even if he himself considered his hands "stained with blood".

Christopher Nolan

Maybe you've never heard his name, but surely you've heard of (or seen) his movies. Blockbuster creator, award winning filmmaker Christopher Nolan is one of the most acclaimed directors, writers and producers of modern cinema.

In his career, Nolan has been nominated 302 times and won 233 awards, amongst which one Oscar for Best Director for Oppenheimer. Other awarded (or, at least, award nominated) projects of his include Interstellar, Dunkirk, Batman - The Dark Knight and The Origin.

It's now time for you to wonder why you're being recommended this movie. For a theme like "Film and image in art", what better than a movie that is art.

When Oppenheimer hit theatres in Portugal, it had such good reviews that I couldn't miss the chance to see it in IMAX. And *oh boy*, was it the best decision I made. An IMAX theatre is a normal theatre but with increased resolution, which allows the viewer to be fully immersed by the experience on screen – and even so, I don't think it made justice to the wonder that was this film. Oppenheimer is a deeply engaging experience that pulls you back to its own timeline. We travel across this scientist's life through cool tones and breathtaking shots – think experiencing the first detonation of an atomic bomb in mesmerizing proximity. Nolan's dramatic conveyance of history being made is so enticing you sit through 3 hours of visual storytelling and leave wanting more. I can't recommend this watch enough.

MUSIC

'I Know The End', by Phoebe Bridgers

Phoebe Bridgers is an American indie rock singer, songwriter, guitar player and producer. At 30 years old, she has won four Grammys, one for her solo career and the remaining three as a member of the indie rock band Boygenius.

The song I'm bringing you today is called "I Know the End" and it is the closing track of Phoebe's second album "Punisher". "I Know the End" is a melancholic apocalyptic ballad that, apart from being extremely visual and descriptive, conveys the feeling of being exactly in the eye of the storm she's creating. I recommend you listen to it before continue reading. Have you? Perfect.

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To each their own opinion, as they say, but I'd like to give you my visual interpretation of this masterpiece of a song. Bridgers inserts us in a small town, in what I'd like to believe is the middle of nowhere. Overgrown, abandoned, still in time ("Talkin' on a rusty swing set"), a birthplace from which you'd like to flea but won't until you absolutely need to. As if the end of the world was just another day, the song portrays what is a haunted childhood through sights along the roads of salvation, as one drives away from the apocalypse ("A slaughter house, an outlet mall / Slot machines, fear of God"). It conveys the feeling of doom through what is a sort of blind acceptance ("No, I'm not afraid to disappear"), so real in its own world that, for a brief moment, you might feel the wind gushing through your hair as you stick your head out of the car's window and turn around, only to witness everything you've ever known turned to ashes in the blistering sun of an ominous summer storm – the end of the world ("The billboard said "The End Is Near" / I turned around, there was nothing there / Yeah, I guess the end is here").

In my opinion, one of the best features of this song is the auditive surrounding effect, with thunder echoing above Bridgers' voice during the line "Big bolts of lightning hanging low" and the ever so unsettling screaming that brings the track to an end, which fades into what is almost a gasp for air "as the world caves in" – another great listen if you're feeling the apocalyptic vibe.
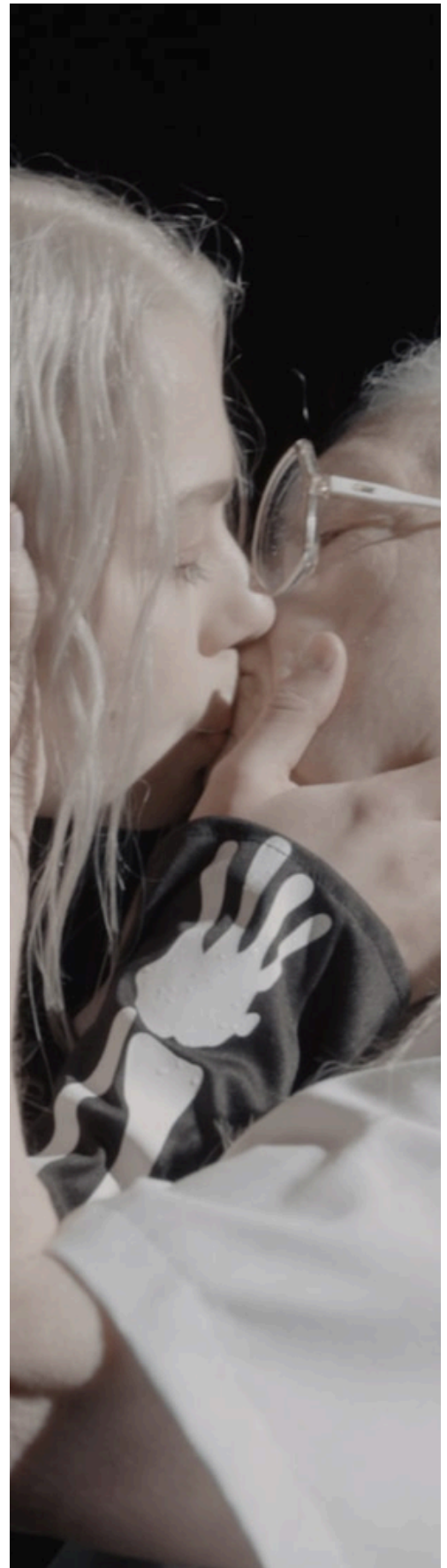
More than a reading, this song is a beautifully crafted piece of interpretative fiction that you should listen to. None the less, here are the lyrics of the third verse:

"*Drivin' out into the sun*

Let the ultraviolet cover me up

Went looking for a creation myth

Ended up with a pair of cracked lips

Windows down, scream along

To some America First rap-country song

A slaughterhouse, an outlet mall

Slot machines, fear of God

Windows down, heater on

Big bolt of lightning hanging low

Over the coast, everyone's convinced

It's a government drone or an alien spaceship

Either way, we're not alone

I'll find a new place to be from

A haunted house with a picket fence

To float around and ghost my friends

No, I'm not afraid to disappear

The billboard said "The End Is Near"

I turned around, there was nothing there

Yeah, I guess the end is here"

Creators

Although we can all agree that there are some extraordinary pieces of fiction out there that are art in of themselves, there really is nothing better than the real world. Sometimes we forget to look around and appreciate the marvels of our nature, art in its truest form. As a reminder that the world is so much more than screens and songs, I want to leave you with two of my favourite content creators, who made it their mission to show the internet some of the most beautiful corners of this planet.

Sorelle Amore

Helene Myhre
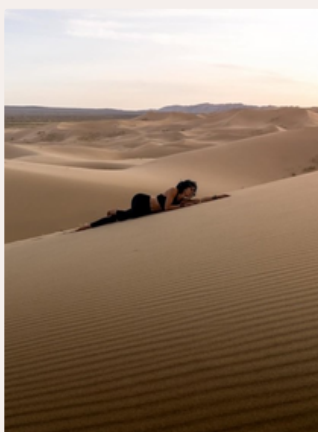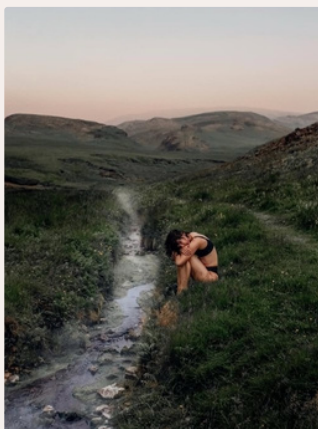
Sorelle Amore

Sorelle is a 33-year-old Australian photographer who documents the world and her experience as a human on her platform. She's been all over the world, capturing its beauty through her own unique lens and expressing her own being through the use of self-portrait. A pioneer of the Advanced Selfie movement, Sorelle has stolen glimpses of just about everywhere and made them available for everyone to experience – from the warm buzzing heart of Icelandic volcanoes to the sanded landscapes of Socotra, Yemen.

You can find her on most mainstream platforms, from Instagram to Youtube, documenting her journey towards becoming what she calls a "free human" – and even on Spotify, if you're a fan of shoegaze and hyperpop.

@sorelleamore on Instagram

Helene Myhre

Helene is a Norwegian woman with a passion for her own country. She's been travelling full time for the last five years, getting to know every corner of Norway that there is to know – and detailing it in an interactive guide available for purchase. From mystic waterfalls and flowery scenery to snow ridden mountains and icy lakes, she's shown almost everything that her homeland has to offer – and will keep doing so. Apart from displaying some of the best natural art, she also has a knitting business that she runs on the side – and that is totally worth checking out.

Helene can be found on most mainstream platforms, showcasing Norway through vibrant colours and aesthetically pleasing shots.

@helenemoo on Instagram

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